



## map turtle

*Graptemys geographica*

Kingdom:	Animalia
Division/Phylum:	Chordata - vertebrates
Class:	Reptilia
Order:	Testudines
Family:	Emydidae

## Features

The map turtle ranges from seven to 10 3/4 inches long. The male is smaller than a female, which also has a much larger head. Its shell is slightly flattened and has a keel (ridge) in the center of the carapace (upper shell). The carapace is green, olive, or brown with a dim pattern of lines. The plastron (lower shell) is yellowish with no markings. This animal has a yellow spot behind its eye and yellow lines on the head, neck, and tail. The back edge of the carapace has projections like the teeth of a saw.

## Natural History

The map turtle is found in rivers, sloughs, and lakes, particularly where the bottom is muddy and plants are present. It has large crushing jaws and eats mollusks (snails, slugs, and others), crayfish, snails, and insects. It is aquatic, coming to land only to lay eggs or to bask in the sun on logs or other objects along the water's edge. It feeds in the early morning and late evening. It is slow to hibernate and may be seen

walking around on the bottom of a water body even when ice covers the water. Courtship and mating occur from March until May. The female digs a nest in soil some distance away from the water where she deposits 10 to 20 eggs that hatch in late summer to early fall (or as late as the following spring). Many localities where map turtles were found in the past appear now to lack them. However, since the species is still abundant in the Mississippi River, map turtles currently are not protected, although a license is required to trap them.

## Habitats

interior rivers and streams; Mississippi River

## Iowa Status

common, native

## Iowa Range

Mississippi River and the lower reaches of larger eastern rivers

## Bibliography

Iowa Department of Natural Resources. 2001.  
*Biodiversity of Iowa: Aquatic Habitats* CD-ROM.